

REMARKS

This Amendment addresses the issues outstanding from the final Office Action dated December 18, 2008. Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

By this Amendment, Claims 18 and 24 have been amended to recite certain distinctive features of Applicants' invention with greater particularity, Claim 20 has been amended for consistency, and Claim 21 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. New Claims 25-28 have been added in order to provide more comprehensive protection for particular aspects of Applicants' invention. Accordingly, Claims 18-20, and 22-28 are pending, with Claims 18 and 24 being independent.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 18-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Knudsen in view of Ratti.

Without acceding to the rejection, independent Claims 18 and 24 have been amended more particularly to recite that the elastic seal portion of the seal body integrally includes a cylindrical steering penetration portion through which the steering element passes and with which said steering element makes sliding contact in a rotational direction, an annular sealing portion of greater diameter

than the cylindrical steering penetration portion arranged substantially coaxially with the cylindrical steering penetration portion, and a pair of elastic deforming rings axially spaced from one another and connecting the cylindrical steering penetration portion and the annular sealing portion. Amended Claims 18 and 24 further recite that the annular sealing portion is brought into pressure contact with a sealing surface formed at the axial end of the tubular member, with the elastic deforming rings allowing relative movement of the cylindrical steering penetration portion and the annular sealing portion.

It is apparent that the Knudsen and Ratti patents, whether considered individually or together, fail to teach or suggest at least the aforementioned features of Applicants' invention.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the outstanding rejection be withdrawn and that this application now be passed to issue.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 (XA-10296) any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing

of this paper and has not been separately requested, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: /Mitchell W. Shapiro/
Mitchell W. Shapiro
Reg. No. 31,568

Miles & Stockbridge, P.C.
1751 Pinnacle Drive
Suite 500
McLean, Virginia 22102-3833
(703) 903-9000

Otilia Gabor
Reg. No. 60,217

CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office on June 17, 2009.

/Mitchell W. Shapiro/
Mitchell W. Shapiro